Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1192 (1992)[1]

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, its outcome and implications for Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly refers to its Resolution 983 (1992) on a concerted European preparation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, as well as to the participation of the Council of Europe's representatives in the conference.

2. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was held in Rio de Janeiro, (Brazil), from 1 to 14 June 1992.

3. The Assembly appreciates the efforts made by all those who contributed to the success of the Rio Summit, whether national delegations, non-governmental organisations or others. Notably it pays tribute to the work accomplished by the United Nations organs in preparing the conference.

4. The Assembly underlines the special responsibility of the United States of America as well as other industrialised countries in the field of environmental protection and invites them to intensify their efforts in favour of ecology.

5. The Assembly particularly welcomes the positive output of the conference, in particular the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Biodiversity Convention, ‘‘Agenda 21", the Statement on Forest Principles and the Rio Declaration.

6. However, taking into account the small number of concrete commitments in the above-mentioned texts, the real impact of the conference will depend to a great extent on the way in which its output is endorsed and put into effect.

7. ‘‘Agenda 21", programme of action for sustainable development, should, in so far as it relates to international organisations, become a guideline for the action of the Council of Europe and other European organisations in the field of environmental activities.

8. The Assembly emphasises the unique position and experience of the Council of Europe in the area of environmental protection, consisting notably of :

8.1. the parliamentary dimension of the Organisation ;

8.2. its role as a platform for local and regional authorities, indispensable for implementation of effective environmental protection ;

8.3. its activities and contacts on a pan-European level ;

8.4. the extension of the impact of the Council of Europe's activities through many of its counterparts (for example, national and regional parliaments or administrations, local councils, etc.) ;

8.5. its vast experience in certain privileged areas of its work (for example, arousing public interest, education, the legislative area, protection of nature and natural resources).

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1. Assembly debate on 1 October 1992 (13th Sitting) (see Doc. 6667, report of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, Rapporteur : Mrs Severinsen). Text adopted by the Assembly on 1 October 1992 (13th Sitting).

9. The Assembly can put the above-mentioned possibilities at the disposal of co-operation programmes with present and future partners.

10. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

10.1. intensify preparations for the second pan-European conference of Ministers of the Environment, to be held in spring 1993 in Lugano (Switzerland), and make sure that the Parliamentary Assembly is associated in the work of this conference and its follow-up ;

10.2. review existing structures and instruments of intergovernmental co-operation in this field and consider, among other issues, the setting up of a single European ministerial conference for the environment dealing with and giving impetus to the environmental activities of the different international and European organisations and assuring a minimum of co-ordination among these activities ;

10.3. intensify the Council of Europe's programme of action in the field of environmental protection in particular with regard to the three areas where the Council of Europe has a clear and privileged position :

a. strengthening of existing legal instruments (for example, the Bern Convention), rapid adoption of the draft convention on civil liability on compensation for damage to the environment, preparing other legal instruments on environmental protection through penal law as well as deploying other necessary efforts to harmonise national environmental legislations ;

b. promoting information, education and public awareness of environmental issues, in particular by strengthening the action of the Naturopa Centre of the Council of Europe ;

c. protection of the natural resources of Europe - nature, flora, fauna, water - and also protection of the man-made environment - rural landscapes and architectural heritage (rural and urban) ;

10.4. organise close co-operation and possibly division of labour with other international and European organisations active in these fields such as OECD, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Nordic Council, and the European Community ;

10.5. intensify co-operation with the countries of central and eastern Europe, both as regards aid to the latter and mutual exchange of experience ;

10.6. invite the North-South Centre in Lisbon, as well as organs created under the Bern Convention, to conceive a new co-operation programme with some African countries (notably in the framework of the above convention) ;

10.7. invite member governments :

a. to put into effect the measures contained in the Rio conventions and other documents as early and completely as possible, both by adopting new legislation and introducing necessary administrative rules and practices ;

b. to participate in the follow-up activities to the Rio Conference and in the work of ecological bodies designated to implement the summit's objectives ;

c. to contribute financially to the global ecological effort, notably in the form of aid to developing countries, in order to attain the foreseen level of aid of 0,7% of their GNP ;

d. to develop their mutual bilateral and multilateral co-operation in order to meet the objectives fixed by the Rio Conference.